



SCHOOL COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2017 • VOLUME 21

Thankfulness

October is a month to celebrate all that we are thankful for; our families, friends, teachers and other important people that make our lives special.

It is also the month that most school councils have their first productive meeting following election of members. It is exciting to look at a new school year and all the possibilities to come together as school communities to make the education of all students better.

Parents Engaged in Education hope that you will join us in DREAMING BIG! Our goal is to have every parent dreaming big for their child and to dream big for their child's school. This is especially important for schools in priority neighbourhoods where not all parents are able to DREAM BIG for their children. As school communities, we need to create a school environment that uplifts every child and lets them work to be the best that they can be.

On October 28th, PEIE will be hosting a free event for parent leaders across Ontario and we invite you to DREAM BIG with us. This event will be the first province wide school council training symposium. Participants will learn best practices but be referred back to their board for specific policies and processes.

This month our contributor, Sara Westbrook, has written a beautiful article for all parents about the need to DREAM BIG for their children and some great tips on how to inspire the conversation around dreaming as a family!

Great to review at this time a year!

See our newsletter from October 2015 which includes the following:

- Understanding Regulation 612/00
- Parent engagement in secondary school
- Parent orientation: Building a school council orientation kit

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Sara Westbrook

Teaching Children the

Art of Dreaming Big



School Council Chairs

Balancing School and Home Life

When I talk to parent leaders across the province and ask what inspired them to become part of their school council, they usually respond “I do it for my child and for all the kids in the school”.

There are times when we become overwhelmed by trying to do our best at the school and as a parent. The secret is balance. By establishing a balance between these responsibilities, as well as work, is key to feeling positive about all the roles you play in life.

It is equally important to balance the roles between being a council member and just another parent in the classroom. This is very important when communicating with your child’s teacher where your true role is the same as every other parent in the class. Using your position in the council as leverage for getting results from your child’s teacher will not be beneficial for anyone involved. Focusing on the role of the council which is to consider matters that are relevant

to improving the educational experience for all children will lead to great things for your school.

Indeed navigating these competing roles can be challenging, as I experience first hand during the almost 15 years I volunteered as part of school councils. Out of that experience I can offer the following tips that may assist you in reaching some balance in your school/home work.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Communication is key when a parent is taking on the new role as a member of a school council.

Letting your family know why it is important to you to be active at school will help them understand your desire to make things better for all students at the school. Discussing the need for parents to get involved at the school and their education will be an example of the importance of education and their school community.

Keeping everyone up to date on meeting or event scheduling will help organize the family.

Engaging your children to help at events that you are assisting with at school will make them feel important and also allow them to see the value of your volunteer work to the whole school community.

WORKING TOGETHER – BE AN EFFECTIVE DELEGATOR

There may be times when it seems easier or more efficient to do things yourself when working on a project or an event, however, this is a perfect way to get overwhelmed. This can be a perfect way for things to become unbalanced. By doing more yourself, your time commitment to school activities can end up taking time away from your family. Instead, learn to delegate to other members in your group.

It may take someone else twice as long, but, supporting them by training them or assisting them rather than taking over, will help balance your life and increase their fulfillment as a member of the council.

RESIST THE URGE TO VOLUNTEER FOR EVERYTHING!

Not only does volunteering for every project or event drain your energy, it drains your time with your family.

Often other parents may not volunteer for tasks because they assume that you will do it. For instance, when you always volunteer for the lunch program the council is sponsoring, other parents may not bother volunteering because they think you have it covered. This can actually have a negative effect on the council and on your reputation. By not requiring other parents to get involved, they may get disinterested and not feel they play a valuable role at the school. In addition, people may turn your volunteer spirit into a feeling that you simply like to control all activities at the school.

If you are concerned that things won't get done if you are not "leading the charge" then offer to assist in a less active role and empower other parents to take the lead.

By not volunteering for everything you may have the time to appreciate all that the council accomplishes at the school and not see it simply through the lens of how much work it is for you.

SOMETIMES ITS FUN TO BE JUST ANOTHER MOM/DAD AT THE SCHOOL

Sometimes it can be fun just to be another parent at the school, discussing classroom activities and sharing your things that might be going on with your family as well as catching up with what is going on with other families.

If conversation veers to school matters it is appropriate to say that you are not wearing your "council hat" right now, and are enjoying this chance to "chat".

Take advantage of at least one opportunity in the year to attend an event as a family instead of volunteering to run the event. You may gain a whole new perspective on what great opportunities the council gives to the community.

THE PRO'S AND CON'S

If you get to a point where you are unsure about the balance between school and home life (which includes work), it is helpful to make a "Pro's and Con's list".

At the top of the list, write down your position and a few points about the responsibilities it entails. Then under the PRO category, list the work that you do that gives you satisfaction and the results of that work.

Under the CON category, list the work that you do that you feel less satisfied with and that leaves you tired or frustrated.

Take the CON list and look at ways to shift these responsibilities or ask for assistance in accomplishing the tasks.

Balance in everyone's life is key and will leave those that are important to you at home and at school better off for your efforts!

PRO'S & CON'S LIST

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A FRESH TAKE ON SCHOOL FUNDRAISING!



**Students sell Ontario-grown fruit
Empire apples (8 lb for \$15)
and Root vegetables (14 lb for \$13)**

Ontario schools enrol May 2 - Oct 2 for November delivery

- ✓ Great profit for school - 40% of sales
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Healthy Fundraising
for Ontario Schools



I often share stories with young people about two big dreams I had.

The first was my dream of singing the national anthem at a Blue Jays game. Despite being told no multiple times, my persistence helped turn that dream into a reality.

The second was my audition on Canadian Idol. The judges told me I couldn't sing and I should do something else. When I left the competition that day I felt sad, frustrated, angry and disappointed. I felt like giving up. I realized that if I chose to give up I wouldn't be respecting myself and my dreams.

Even though some people thought my dreams were unrealistic, I decided to believe in me. Another person that always chose to believe in me and my big dream was my mum. Her support more than I can ever express.

I'm so glad I decided to learn the important lessons the challenging circumstances were teaching me - lessons of determination, putting in the effort, overcoming challenges and most importantly - bouncing back from disappointment. I am now a full time motivational speaker and singer - a career I absolutely love.

Big dreams allow children to learn that they are responsible for their choices, rather than being a victim of their circumstances. Setbacks and challenges will happen. They teach creativity and flexibility. They open their mind to new possibilities, innovations and develop empathy for themselves and others.

It's important to give children ongoing support in dreaming big and in helping to achieve their dreams. Here's 6 ways you can help your children become big dreamers.

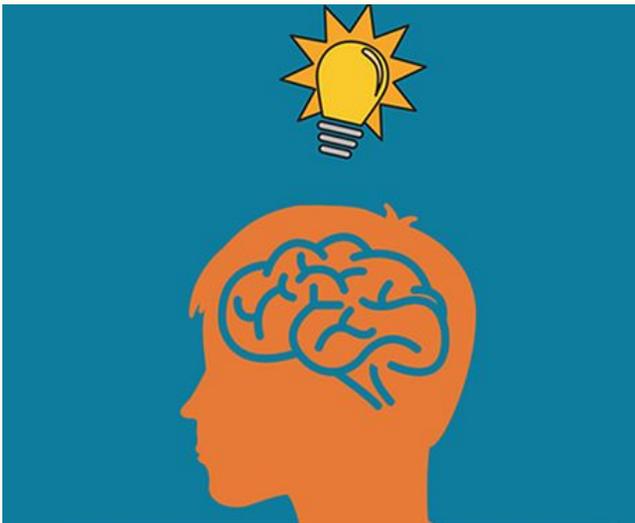
1. DREAM TOGETHER

It's important to be a role model for your children and a great way to start is to dream together, not only as individuals but also as a family.



Share your dreams with your children. They will gain courage in their own dreams, when they see you chasing yours, celebrating your successes and bouncing back from your challenges.

2. BE INSPIRED BY OTHER BIG DREAMERS



Your children can learn from the world's top scientists, musicians, entrepreneurs, artists, athletes, books, movies, and even TED talks.

They can also learn from inspiring people in your family and community.

Discuss the challenges and successes these people encountered and ask your children how they can apply what they learned to their own lives.

3. TURN DREAMS INTO GOALS

Dreams become achievable through goal setting and action. Start by encouraging your children to keep a journal, make a bucket list or even a UPower map .



Help them research what needs to happen to make their dream a reality. For example, finding out I needed to provide a recording of myself singing to the Blue Jays was a turning point in making that dream a reality.

4. CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY



Working together to break down their goals into manageable, achievable chunks allows them to see that effort pays off and that goals are achieved through small steps and consistent action.

Put time frames on actions to create accountability and structure. Then, if those commitments aren't met, talk about what stopped them.

5. ADDRESS CHALLENGES, SETBACKS AND FAILURES

Young people need to learn that challenges and mistakes are normal. What's important is how they approach them. They need to:



- Believe it's possible.
- Put in the effort.
- Stay determined.

Let them know that the word 'NO' doesn't always mean something isn't possible, it means they may need more information, a more creative solution and that it is another opportunity to hear 'YES'. **Mistakes and setbacks are opportunities to learn and grow.**

6. ENCOURAGE POSITIVE SELF-TALK

What children say to themselves matter. In my UPower Journal, I teach children the following affirmations:

- I can do this.
- I will put in the effort.
- I can succeed.
- I don't need to know all the answers.
- I can ask for help.
- I just haven't achieved it YET .



Over time what children say and repeat to themselves will determine their self confidence and ability to bounce back. It can even affect how big they allow themselves to dream.

Now you have a recipe to help your children dream big. I hope you'll let yourself

DREAM BIG too!

Until next time...



about the author

Sara Westbrook is a Motivational Speaker/Singer/ Author specializing in Resilience, Confidence & Mental Well-Being. She has performed her UPower presentations to over 250,000 students, parents and educators.

She is author of 'The UPower Journal' - a book for youth to not only express their thoughts and emotions, but also to build their confidence, resilience and mental well-being through the personal stories, many exercises and quotes found inside.

To book a presentation or to learn more about Sara visit www.sarawestbrook.com

ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

Experienced. Knowledgeable. Respected.

It's the start of another new school year filled with great expectations.

Ontario teachers are ready to lead, inspire and develop young hearts and minds.

Find out how well-qualified your child's teacher is. [Learn more at oct.ca/findateacher](http://oct.ca/findateacher)



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WORLD will be **FRENCH**
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Parents

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Parents Engaged in Education is a not-for-profit organization formed by experienced school council members to provide resources and skill building opportunities for parent leaders across the province.



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